The White Tsar

and Other Poems

By

Henry Bedlow

Illustrated by

J. Steeple Davis.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
PS1089
Chap. ..... Copyright No. .....
Shelf .B6W4
1895
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE WHITE TSAR

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HENRY BEDLOW

ILLUSTRATED

BY

J. STEEPLE DAVIS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT
No. 4
CITY OF WASHINGTON
12578

NEW YORK
J. SELWIN TAIT & SONS
65 FIFTH AVENUE

COPYRIGHT, 1897, BY
J. SELWIN TAIT & SONS

All rights reserved

PRESS OF
SIMPSON & LYALL,
113 & 115 WEST 25TH STREET
NEW YORK.

TO

HORACE B. FRY

These Verses are dedicated

AS A FEEBLE TESTIMONY, NOT ONLY OF MY ADMIRATION
OF HIS INTELLECTUAL FELLOWSHIP WITH MEN OF
MARK IN MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC ART,
BUT LIKEWISE OF MY ENJOYMENT
WITH HIM OF A LITERARY
CAMARADERIE.

HENRY BEDLOW.

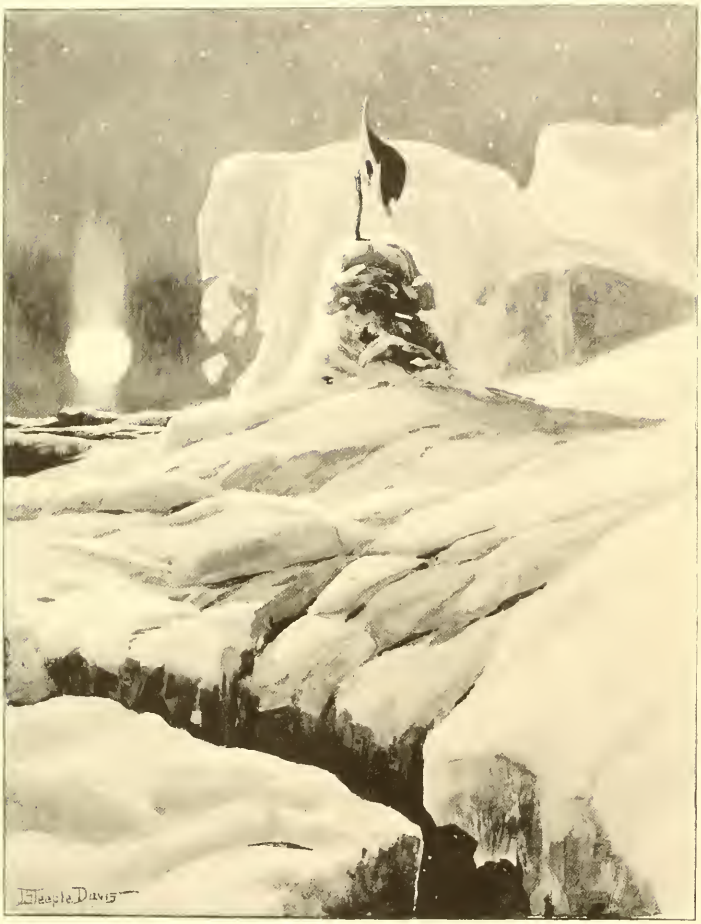
NEW YORK, *January*, 1895.

THE WHITE TSAR

J. Steeple Davis

I.

He was cubbed in a cave of Arctic snow,
Among ruthless kin of that region frore;
He is King where the Norland whirlwinds blow,
And the toppling Ice-cliffs plunge and roar.
He sits alert where the hummocks crowd;
When the Boreal Cyclone churns the sea,
And the rending Ice-pack thunders loud—
To the growl of his grizzly majesty.


Elizabeth Davis

II.

Where the white-fox barks and the Spitz-dog howls—
At the phantom gleams of Auroral light,
Over hummock and drift he roams, or prowls—
In the stabbing cold of the Polar night.
In gorges rent by the turbulent deep
He's a fearless Hunter in weltering gloom,
Or the Cairn's grim Warder, where bold men sleep—
Embalmed by frost till the crack of doom.

J. Steeple Davis

III.

Right royal his state on the Ice-foot's peak,
Unmoved by the Chaos and Coil below,
The swirl of the sleet—the shrill wind's shriek,
Appareled in ermine of spangled snow.
His is a kingdom forever patrolled
By ghastliest agents of Death, as fell
—In tyrannous charter of endless cold—
As the gelid circle of Dante's Hell.

IV.

His haunts are the Earth's magnetic pole,
And its lodestone Alps he clambers on,
Weird tracts, where the racing snow-waves roll,
Before the Arctic Euroclydon.
He prowls by light of the North's false dawn,
O'er deserts of silence and waste-wide steppes
Where fissure and chasm abysmal yawn,
Mocking the sight with unspeakable depths.

J. Steeple Davis

V.

'Tis He who is Lord of that baleful zone,
Usurped by the measureless cold of space,
An Empire chartless—a realm unknown—
And Glacier-barred from the human race.
From his frosty lair in the mountain's rift,
He sees the squadrons that northward go,
Gored by the cusps of the Berg adrift,
Or brayed in the crush of the grinding Floe.

VI.

He clambers over their cribbled decks,
The embodied grimness of Arctic night!
And nuzzles their dead on the battered wrecks,
A tragic and gruesome Troglodyte!
Grappling the Walrus or clutching the Seal;
By the Ice-blink's pale and spectral glow,
Of perilous foes no fear to feel
Save the sledded and Spitz-drawn Esquimaux.

Lippie Davis

VII.

The unattainable, uttermost North,
Where the Ptarmagan's flight has never gone,
Whence the cruel frosts of the World go forth,
And man has not been, since Eocene dawn.
No Ocean flashing in radiant brine,
But frozen Chaos, petrific, profound,
Where gaunt, grim Crags in their death-cold shine
Reverberate Horror, as if t'were Sound.

VIII.

He is Feudal Lord of that lonesome clime,
From its Ice-capped verge to its solid sea,
His vassals are Tempests and Ice and Rime,
They guard his fastness inexorably,
Which man shall forever in vain assail!
As proof to assault as to Sap and Mine!
For its glacier-bastions none can scale,
Nor vanquish its Ice-pack's serried line.

IX.

Alone in that winnowed wilderness,
Fearless he ranges o'er waste and wold,
By chasms rent in resistless stress
Of steadfast, inconceivable cold.
In Stygian gloom or Boreal light,
By fixed-star fires or midnight sun,
He's Tsar of a realm, immaculate white,
Death, Silence, Horror, and He all one!

J. Stephen Davis

XI.

Its force by no Paixhan or Dahlgren backed:
No ponderous Krupp, behind bulwarks seen:
Yet a chance essay of its dread impact,
As deadly as Nitro-Glycerine.
A clue to some Ocean Mysteries!
Abandoned hulks, lost crews, wrecks, drifting spars,
And foundering ships which no eye sees,
Save the Omniscient God's and the Grizzly Tsar's.

DIES CANICULARES

I.

Days Leonine! a red-disk sinking low;
Quite dead the world of glad green summer lies;
Now russet with a desert's tawny glow
Under th' unbroken bronze of cloudless skies.
The wind-swept downs and fragrant woods are stilled,
Intense the rural quiet of the scene,
With silence, like a living presence filled,
And coming night, hot, sultry, and serene.

II.

A lack of zest! a lassitude of will!
The slothful languor, of exhaustion bred!
The mystic silence of a scene so still!
The hush that haunts a home where lies the dead,
For Summer's desolation lies around
Arid as with torrific drought of Scindes
Or simoon-blasts, and although clouds abound,
They seem but Mausoleums of dead winds.

III.

Since dawn, in heliac consort with the Sun
Has Sirius flamed, slow-circling to the West;
With Summer's solstice-verdure quite undone;
And vegetative nature sore oppressed;
Of song-full coverts heat makes solitudes,
And all their feathered populace succumb;
Within the mazy tangle of the woods,
The voices of the rivulets are dumb.

IV.

The wild-flowers in the torrid fields are dead,
Slain by unpitying heat and unslaked thirst;
The Linden's leafy Vallombrosa shed,
Seared as the Fig in Bethany, Christ-cursed,
The shriveled vine, in dust and cobweb clings,
The brazen sunflower bends its head in shade,
The Poultry gasp with half unfolded wings:
In turbid pools the sweltering cattle wade.

V.

The short dull sultry nights; long scorching days,
When no leaf stirs, no freshening winds arise,
But all the palpitating earth ablaze,
Beneath the glowing brazier of the skies.
The Golden Fleece of cloud, that in the West,
Awaits the blood-red disk's foredoomed eclipse,
Stands — to the fervid fancy there confessed—
The "Great White Throne" of the Apocalypse.

VI.

The muzzled mastiff lolls his dripping tongue;
The droning flies wheel ceaselessly about;
The robin leaves his noon-tide song unsung,
While in the tepid fishpond gasps the trout.
The midday fervor raids the drowsy woods,
Now yellowing towards the Autumn's rueful blight;
Upon her nest the mother robin broods
With open bill and wings in act of flight.

VII.

Evaporation, like a furnace smoke,
Rolls land-ward as a fever-breeding mist;
The Mill grinds not, no fear the Miller choke
With wind-blown powder of the dusty grist.
Glossed in a breathless calm the river lies,
Like standing-water in a lone lagoon,
And, as the reek of some great torment, rise
Its vapors in the dazzle of the noon.

VIII.

All solace from the closing day, a dream!
Under the Heaven's constellated rays
There is no respite! and the midnights seem
Only less bright, but not less burning, days.
A light that dazzles and a glare that blights,
No frolic wind at sport amid the leaves,
And not a breath through all the sultry nights
To stir the tissue that the spider weaves.

IX.

The town lies hushed throughout the brazen noon,
There is no tramp of traffic-seeking feet;
The fervid air is dead, or in a swoon,
All vital vigor atrophied with heat.
Far off some burnished dome glints dazzlingly,
Impulsively the eyes its splendor shun
Which in the blinding glitter seems to be
A molten drop from the candescent sun.

X.

So rests it shimmering in the dog-day heats,
Its metal roofs and spires flaming so,
One thinks of Sodom: in its torrid streets,
Of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
The homeless curs, the heat in vain evade,
As stretched on scorching flags they panting lie,
Or staggering onward from the sun to shade,
Seem threatening rabies with a lurid eye.

XI.

Upon the highway, dusty as a bin,
The gawky rustic with his team keeps pace;
Dripping with reechy sweat and now and then,
With grimy shirt-sleeve, mops a grimier face.
Behind high-stepping steeds—wealth-conscious, proud,
Reclined in languid ease, with regal air,
His chariot flashing through a golden cloud,
Rolls, like an earthly God, the Millionaire.

XII.

A BOUNDLESS joy it were to see again
The festal glory of the past; once more
To witness shine chase shadow o'er the grain,
And hear the pine-woods whispering like the shore;
Refreshed as men in barren lands, in drought,
Seeing the rain-clouds gathering on the hills,
Hearing 'mong craggy peaks the thunder's shout,
And the low laughter of the brimming rills.

J. G. Keeple Davis

XIII.

Blest bead-roll of the consecrated hours,
(No niggard largess of the June benign!)
When bosk and dell with all their chaliced flowers,
Poured perfume out like sacramental wine.
And summer as a rosy, sainted Nun,
Whose vows, renouncing worldliness, were given,
Doff'd veil and coif — her Recluse hopes were won —
For such terrestrial bliss made Earth seem Heaven.

XIV.

The melodious riot of the nesting birds;
The virgin raiment of the woods and plains;
The lush green pastures and the grazing herds;
The pattering tumult of the useful rains.
The fragrance of the flowers at falling dew —
Balsamic odors of the Pine and Fir;
The homeless clouds that drift athwart the blue,
And balmy winds with all the leaves astir.

XV.

The evanescence of the trailing mists,
That veil the pine-tops with their vapory lawn;
Voluptuous languors; lovers' moonlight trysts;
The song-bird greetings of the herald dawn.
The dew-wet roses that await the bee,
The aftershower-incense of the loam,
The waving clover, like a wind-swept sea,
With every billow tossing purple foam.

Florence Dauer

XVI.

The cloistral quiet of the Forest's heart,
The sombre stretches of its dusk defiles,
Where the world's stir has neither place nor part
In the green gloom of its cathedral aisles.
The boudoirs of the wood-nymphs, cool and lone,
By legend-folk deserted long ago.
Leaving — since Sylphs and Dryads all are gone —
The brooding silence of a nameless woe.

XVII.

Morn's frankincense etherially faint;
The sweet contention of the birds in song,
The Oriole's anthem and the Swallow's plaint,
The Thrush, the Laureate of the choral throng.
The Constellations' glory and the Moon's,
Studding the sapphire vastness of the skies;
The salt-sea freshness of the sandy dunes,
The thrill and pathos of Immensities.

XVIII.

But now one wearies of the tristful day!
And in a dull dejection frets the soul;
Or roused to action, finds his footsteps stray
Most purposeless — and careless of their goal.
There is no softness in th' abounding light,
All sense of summer-wassail past and gone,
On the green-growing world a canker blight,
And universal loveliness — forlorn.

XIX.

Earth lies athirst! and with dumb pleading mouth,
Like Dives damned, to Heaven in vain appeals.
The lee-set clouds that thunder in the South,
Add but more torment to the pang she feels.
The illusive benison of coming rain,
Beholding there the vapory congress massed,
Only to see the pageant fade again;
Breaking the promise to the hope at last.

XX.

The soil is ashes and the air is steam,
The fervid Heavens like a burning scroll,
And all the earth one incalescent gleam
From glowing zenith to the fusing pole.
Th' accomplishment of prophecy begun!
Or, Fancy ranging back to mythic days,
Sees Phaeton drive the Chariot of the Sun,
And in his madness set the World ablaze.

BEDAWÈEYEH

I.

The shadows on my way were long —
I journeyed as the day was closing:
In stubbled swaths — a weary throng —
The sun-browned Sickle-men reposing.
From forth the girdled sheaves she stepped,
With braided locks, robes loosely flowing,
And the rude path towards Lydda kept —
The weary road that I was going.

II.

Slowly the sinking sun immersed
The enfolding mists in rays electric:
The pageantry of Dawn reversed,
Or dying daylight's febrile hectic.
Unutterable splendors streamed,
In vast chromatic cataclysm,
Till all the emblazoned Heaven seemed
Phantasmagoria of the Prism.

III.

Though faint, and flagging, travel-worn,
She, smiling, looked so kind yet queenly;
As mists scroll backward from the dawn,
All ruth furled from my heart serenely.
Vague sadness unto joy gave room,
Before this fair and gentle comer,
As to the sunshine, woodland gloom,
When Autumn sighs through all its summer.

IV.

The Syrian sun had kissed her cheek,
Commingling tints of rose and cedar;
Perchance the daughter of a Sheykh,
"A dweller in the tents of Kedar;"
Yet timid as distrustful deer,
That browse on Moab's tender mosses,
Or young gazelles which feed in fear,
Around the lilied water-courses.

V.

No yashmak her sweet face concealed—
By Islam's Creed "Veiled should be woman"—
Her brunette beauty stood revealed,
In open scorn of Creed and Koran.
She gave a startled look askance,
'Neath arching brows which seemed to lower,
Yet something wistful in the glance,
That charmed and cheered the way-worn Giaour.

VI.

Long-lashed and Almond-shaped the eyes,
Whose darkness kohhl made not the deeper,
O'er which faint lines of brow arise,
Curved like the sickle of the reaper.
Her arms were decked with golden bands,
And one sustained an antique pitcher,
Poised on her dainty head — Her hands!
Could hhenna make their hue the richer?

VII.

Was she a maid of Aryan race,
Browned by the Libyan desert's glowing?
Or in her form and stately grace,
Her proud Semitic lineage showing?
No bigot she of Mooslim creed,
Perchance an Alien! taught to scoff it,
She was of beauty rare indeed,
I'll swear by Allah and his prophet.

VIII.

With downward eyelids paced she by,
Her dark locks bound with glittering fillet,
Graceful as when, the harvest nigh,
Bends to the breeze the rustling millet.
Her limbs with rhythmic ease imbued,
Made onward motion seem like gliding,
Her robes but showed her chastely nude,
To eyes profane such charms confiding.

IX.

Her clinging garments, half afloat,
A lovely tumult made in waving,
And where they closely press — denote,
Enough to set a Sculptor raving.
For through her tunic's treacherous woof,
Clinging or loose, was made disclosure
Of faultless form, artistic proof —
In all its contour's chaste exposure.

X.

The cassia-scented Zephyr bold!
Of every charm a ruffian claimant!
Impassioned — formed of them a mould,
Making a matrix of her raiment.
Her lithe and willowy form, expressed
Its amber tint through tunic flowing,
Its soft voluptuous lines confessed,
In Sunset's filtered radiance glowing.

XI.

One moment I enraptured stood,
My sight this sudden vision dazing.
This type of Orient womanhood,
Thus offered to my reverent gazing.
Oh, sacred realm of Palestine,
Though thralled by Imauns, Sheiks, and Fakirs,
Is it a wonder things divine,
Still linger on thy holy acres?

XII.

Adown the road all radiantly,
Streamed shafts of golden-moted splendor.
Onward — a monstrous travesty,
My shadow stalked, grotesquely slender.
O'er dusking field's a glory streamed,
The west flamed like an awful pyre,
While eastward Lydda flashed and gleamed,
Like a new Sodom smote with fire.

XIII.

As fainter Sunset's glory grew,
And twilight veiled the distant village,
When fragrance rose as fell the dew
And shade masked all the golden tillage;
She journeyed by the nodding wheat,
With braided locks, robes loosely flowing,
And paced the road with sandalled feet —
My heart went with the maiden going.

XIV.

When Lydda's palms looked weird in gloom,
And she in glimmering distance faded,
When Cassia-buds and Sandal-bloom,
The blood with sensuous fragrance raided;
When, 'neath the starlight, flashed like gems—
As nightfall on the landscape settles—
The Opal dew-drops on the stems
Of way-side weeds and wild-rose petals;

XV.

When homeward weary camels stalked,
With clinking bells, and harvest laden,
And with their flocks the Shepherds walked,
And with her gleanings came the maiden;
"Till with the night-drops dripped my locks,"
I lingered on the road to Lydda,
And drew not nigh nor tents nor flocks,
But wandered where the dusk had hid her.

XVI.

As haunts the eye when shut, the light
Which dazzled vision in beholding,
So deepening shadows to my sight,
Her phantom image seemed enfolding.
The glory of the sunset's dyes
Encompassed her — my view infected
Held, as on darkness of closed eyes,
Her glowing spectrum there projected.

XVII.

Thus robed in radiance as she went,
As synchronal with my first seeing,
Perfume and light coincident,
Seemed only part of her rare being.
Night's cunning chemistry distilled
From calyx and corolla — essence
Perturbing sweet — the spot was filled,
As by her still pervading presence.

XVIII.

I could not break the subtle thrall,
I needs must near to Lydda dally,
I heard the flute-like Itys-call
Of nightingales in grove and valley;
And like a bridal torch afar,
Amid her radiant sisters gleaming,
Beheld the Anahita star,
And still I lingered, dreaming, dreaming.

XIX.

What was it that endeared her so?
Its deep and sovereign charm infusing,
The ideal face of long ago
That comes all unaware, while musing;
A sweetly haunting face in truth,
With its old thrall my soul assailing,
A lovely legend of my youth,
Linked with regret! now unavailing.

XX.

No fasting Paynim, calm but yearning,
As slow the rolling moments ran,
His wistful eyes with longing, turning,
Towards set of sun in Rhamadan,
Felt more the joy of a repast,
That solaced need, than I in seeing
This vision! as evoked by fast,
This picturesque ideal being.

J. Steeple Davis

XXI.

Aweary I of sand and sun,
And swarthy hordes of fierce Ishmael,
No gentler things to look upon,
Than those rude sons of nomad Baal.
Her face seemed sweet as desert wells,
Which every Islam Hadji blesses,
Cheering as clang of cloistral bells,
To way-worn saint in wildernesses.

XXII.

The Syrian maid, whose cheek embrowned,
A soft Pomegranate tint discloses,
Dark eyes with meaning so profound,
And lips like folded leaves of roses:
Daughter of Jew or Bedawee!
Such grace of form, such chaste demeanor,
I'd swear there's not a fairer She,
'Twixt holiest Mecca and Medina.

XXIII.

I dreamed of kisses sweet as wine,
Lips cooler than Siloah's water;
Clasped in her arms, which like the vine,
Gave love, for strength that did support her;
Of love, where airs breathe nard and balm,
And bulbuls sing 'neath fig and myrtle,
Sweet clime where spring the pine and palm,
And groves are choral with the turtle.

XXIV.

With scrip and staff, a weary hhajj,
I could have toiled through sands to Mekkeh,
And won the Palmer's holy badge,
And brought back blessed gifts to deck her:
I could have changed my sterner creed,
For Islam's faith in famed Hhooreeyeh,
And deemed my heaven fulfilled; my meed
But one, and she, my Bedawèeyeh.

J. Stimple Dick 19

XXV.

Such joys through all my being run,
At sight of her — Samaria's daughter,
As when through desert sand and sun,
Worn Hagar saw the gushing water:
I could have toiled as Jacob did,
A shepherd for the maiden Leah,
And tilled the earth or fed the kid,
For very love of Bedawèeyeh.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 016 211 539 A